

Message Text

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41

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-07 OMB-01

DOT-00 STR-04 ACDA-05 COME-00 TRSE-00 /087 W

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7714

INFO AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USUN NEW YORK 313

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 0342

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BC, RH, SF

SUBJECT: BOTSWANA-RHODESIAN RAIL LINK

REF: A. 75 GABORONE A-54 (NOTAL), B. 75 GABORONE 0699

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

1. MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MOGWE TOLD ME MARCH 4 THAT
GOB CABINET HAS NOT YET CONSIDERED QUESTION OF BOTSWANA-RHODESIAN
RAIL LINK FOLLOWING MOZAMBIQUE'S IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS (MAPUTO 211)

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HE THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT AND CABINET WOULD DISCUSS THIS MATTER IN
THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

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2. MOGWE EXPRESSED THE PERSONAL VIEW THAT THE GOB WOULD NOT CUT THE BOTSWANA-RHODESIAN RAIL LINK IN VIEW OF THE COUNTRY'S HEAVY DEPENDENCE ON SOUTH AFRICA AND RHODESIA AS A SOURCE OF SUPPLY FOR CAPITAL AND CONSUMER GOODS AND NEED TO MOVE PRINCIPAL EXPORTS SUCH AS BEEF AND MINERALS TO SOUTH AFRICAN PORTS OR MARKETS. MOGWE DOUBTED WHETHER SOUTH AFRICA WOULD BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT SUCH AS TRUCKS OR OPERATE THE RAIL LINK ONLY TO BOTSWANA. HE COMMENTED THAT SOME BLACK AFRICAN AND SOCIALIST STATES WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY PRESS BOTSWANA TO CUT THE RAIL LINK. SUCH ACTION IN HIS VIEW WOULD NOT BE IN BOTSWANA'S NATIONAL INTEREST.

3. COMMENT: EVEN IF MOGWE'S POSITION PREVAILS, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE GOB MIGHT EVENTUALLY CONSIDER A PARTIAL EMBARGO IN RESPONSE TO AOU PRESSURE, CONCERN ABOUT DEMONSTRATING AFRICAN SOLIDARITY AND IN THE INTEREST OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH ANY MAJORITY-RULED GOVERNMENT IN RHODESIA. IF THE RHODESIAN RAIL LINE WAS SERIOUSLY DAMAGED WITHIN RHODESIA, BOTSWANA WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY EXPECT SOUTH AFRICA TO COOPERATE IN OPERATING THE RAIL LINE TO AND FROM BOTSWANA.

4. MOGWE SEEMED MAINLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE ANTICIPATED LARGE INFLOW OF REFUGEES FROM NAMIBIA AND RHODESIA IN THE EVENT OF AN ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN THOSE TERRITORIES. HE DOES NOT RULE OUT HOT PURSUIT OPERATION BY RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES IF GUERRILLAS WERE TO ENTER WITH REFUGEES OR BY OTHER MEANS AND BEGIN OPERATING FROM BOTSWANA AS GOB DOES NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO PREVENT SUCH GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES.

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